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## GM, LAMP program motivate youths with real-world experience

Bright spot for students

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Lansing State Journal

Valaree Kyser and Yia Xiong had a job to do for General Motors Corp.

The automaker wanted the two to develop a plan for a factory tour of the Lansing Grand River assembly plant. The tour had to be appropriate for children in grade school through high school.

Knowing how to relate to young people isn't always easy for adults, but Kyser and Xiong didn't have to worry. They were finishing up their senior years at Lansing's Sexton and Everett high schools, respectively, when GM gave them the task.

Other area high school seniors were asked by the automaker to work on projects such as improving materials handling safety or freeing up more space in a supplier's warehouse.

It's all part of the Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership, a program jointly operated by GM, the United Auto Workers and the Ingham Intermediate School District. Up to 60 students participate in yearlong program annually through school,



(Photo by Photo courtesy of the LAMP program)  
On interview: Above, LAMP student Valaree Kyser interviews GM team leader Liz Darcangelis as part of her project.

### i SCHOOL TO WORK

#### WHAT IT IS

- The Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership, or LAMP, is a program that lets high school juniors and seniors spend about half of each school day at a General Motors Corp. facility, where they learn about the manufacturing sector and manufacturing jobs.

#### WHO RUNS THE PROGRAM

- LAMP is a partnership between GM, the United Auto Workers and the Ingham Intermediate School District

#### WHO CAN JOIN

- Students in school districts that operate in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton county can apply for the program.

#### WHY DO IT?

- A study from the Academy for Educational Development found that graduated LAMP students had jobs paying an average of \$11.12 per hour in the 18 months after graduation, compared to an average wage of \$8.86 per

spending half of every school day at a GM facility.

hour for non-LAMP graduates.

- Eighteen months after graduation, 82 percent of LAMP students were employed, compared with the local teen employment rate of 74 percent.

- More LAMP students enrolled in colleges and universities than their non-LAMP peers.

#### Awards

The LAMP program has received the following honors:

- General Motors Best of the Best Award
- Michigan Association of School Boards Special Achievement Award
- Governor's Excellence in Practice Award
- National School and Business Partnerships Award finalist

#### On the Web

- [www.inghamisd.org/cacc/lamp.html](http://www.inghamisd.org/cacc/lamp.html)

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"It's really helped us develop a resume and prepare for college," said Xiong, 19.

Kyser, 17, said she benefited from the program's structure, which demands students act more independently and become self-motivated.

"This gave us real-life experience," she said. "After this, I can really see myself working in a business environment."

There's reason to believe the program has a similar effect on most of its participants. Now in its 10th year, the LAMP program boasts that its graduates are more likely to attend college than their non-LAMP peers.

#### Higher wages

And a study from the Academy for Educational Development at the National Institute for Work and Learning in Washington found that in the year to 18 months after high school graduation, LAMP students worked at jobs with an average wage of \$11.12 an hour, compared with \$8.86 an hour for students who weren't in the program.

Not all LAMP students will enter the engineering field, and that's all right, said Jeff Dole, LAMP program supervisor for the Ingham Intermediate School District. However, he said, as many as 70



percent of the program's students pursue careers in business, manufacturing or engineering - fields explored during the yearlong LAMP program.

Xiong plans to attend Michigan State University and is interested in engineering. Kyser starts at Western Michigan University in the fall but isn't sure what she'll major in.

Some students who decided to stay in manufacturing have advanced, said Dave Simon, LAMP work site coordinator and a GM employee.

"We've had a number of students go on to Kettering (University) and other well-known institutions," Simon said, referring to the college that used to be known as General Motors Institute. "Others have decided this really isn't the career for them."

Giving students a chance to try out a manufacturing career was the reason LAMP was created, Dole said. The program, which originated in Lansing, has since been copied at GM's assembly plant in Hamtramck.

To date, more than 500 students have gone through the program in Lansing.

The LAMP year is divided into several units, each highlighting a different aspect of the industry. Students get an overview of labor, quality assurance systems and business operations.

The year ends with the capstone project. In it, students are given an actual problem GM workers need to resolve and given a chance to find a solution.

In the past, LAMP students have offered suggestions to improve plant space usage and production line efficiency - and the Detroit automaker has taken some of the students' advice.

For their project Kyser and Xiong had to create a tour program for area schools that want to visit the assembly plant. The pair developed a half-day program that gave students a tour of the plant. It also included discussing job opportunities in manufacturing and the education needed to get such a job.

### **Building a tour**

Kyser and Xiong also developed activities such as team-based building projects that would give students a sense of what it's like to be part of an assembly line team.

To complete the project, Xiong toured area schools to find out what children knew about GM and what they wanted to know about the Detroit-based automaker.

"I went to two schools, to fourth- and seventh-graders, and spent five hours talking with them," Xiong said. "I asked them 'What is GM? What does it stand for? What do they do there?' "

The answers showed her and Kyser what topics would need to be covered during the tour.

Meanwhile, Kyser went to the assembly plant and GM offices to talk to workers about the jobs they have and what advice they have for a students who wants to pursue similar careers.

One of Kyser's plant visits took her to Liz Darcangelis, a team leader in the Lansing Grand River body shop. She told Kyser good communication skills are key in her job and encouraged students to learn to write and to speak comfortably before others.

Darcangelis, a 49-year-old who drives to Lansing from Flushing each day, said programs such as LAMP are helping students make better choices for their future.

"This gives them a chance to see that there are a lot of people here who do enjoy the work they do," Darcangelis said. "It's giving them a realistic picture of work."

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